

# FATALITY



AFZF-GA

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD**  
**FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056**



21 August 2002

**MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION**

**SUBJECT: Suicide Prevention – Fatality Memo # 02-19**

1. A troubled domestic relationship has resulted in the death of a III Corps soldier. After being served divorce papers and receiving a letter from his wife stating she was leaving him, this soldier evidently ended his life with a single shot through the heart using a 9mm pistol. This incident occurred while he was alone in his quarters after attending unit PT. His wife had recently taken their two children and departed to another state. The soldier was found by a unit member who went to the quarters to check on why the soldier had failed to report for duty. The soldier made a phone call prior to the death but it has not been determined whom he had tried to call.
2. Examination of the circumstances of this soldier's death indicates it may have been preventable. Specifically, he was a young male, experiencing relationship problems with his spouse, who owned a firearm. The soldier's age, gender, relationship problems, and access to a firearm were all factors indicating he was at risk for committing suicide. Tragically, the problems this soldier was experiencing were known to some of those around him, but they believed and accepted the soldier's position when he told them he could handle his problems.
3. As leaders we have an obligation to react quickly and decisively in order to save our soldier's lives. Whenever a friend tells us that "I can handle it...", we need to immediately put our antennae up and ask the tough questions. A real friend will impose himself / herself on someone in need and insist they seek professional or chain of command help. I cannot stress enough, the command responsibility to our soldiers in cases involving problems we know are significant enough to warrant intervention. As this case shows, we need to constantly stress awareness down to the individual soldier level. First line leaders, friends and relatives are the base line in suicide prevention. Leaders at all levels must emphasize awareness and vigilance. Be aware of the training opportunities available from mental health care providers and the chaplain's offices. Ensure gatekeepers (Company Commanders, First Sergeants, and all first line leaders) receive intervention training. Utilize your resources. There are many available. Ensure training is ongoing for all your soldiers and leaders, especially for new personnel. Do this without delay and make them part of the solution for suicide prevention. Nothing -- nothing -- is solved through a suicide. Only more grief, heartache, and sadness for family and unit members.

**ENSURE WIDEST DISSEMINATION AND POST ON BULLETIN BOARDS**

**B. B. BELL**  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding

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